

285
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(5) *Latanier* (*Thrinax* sp.), a fan-shaped palm which seems to have been used in the past, according to old authors, much more than at the present time, having then served in the manufacture of tables, squeezers, and even baskets. Perhaps the palm has become scarcer, or it may be that the authors were mistaken. Within the reserve its

use is confined today to broom making, and to plaiting and sewing its septae into a sort of game basket (fig. 24) they call "djokom". The people in another part of the island (Penville), where there used to be many and still are a few Caribs, also make of *latanier* a kind of sack which they use for pressing their manioc.

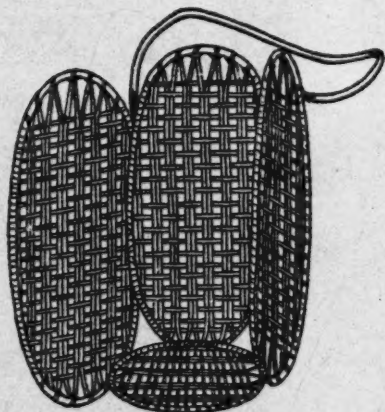


FIGURE 23.—Shoulder basket.

[482]

(6) Bamboo is used as well as for the round baskets mentioned in (4) for making sambwa, a kind of round basket with narrowed mouth, used for carrying fish caught off the rocks. It is also employed as an alternate to cotton thread in making

- [227] *kali*, a local variety of fish pot or landing net used for catching flying fish (fig. 25). The *sambwa* is, except for its shape, of similar construction to the round radial-type baskets and has a cord handle. The *kali*

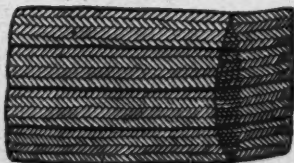


FIGURE 24.—Game basket.

have a bamboo frame and handle and an open hexagonal mesh (similar to that of the panier cocaille) of cotton thread or bamboo.

285

[352]

(7) Simple roll-up mats (fig. 26), on which children or others may sleep, are made from the balizier leaf, dried and bound together horizontally to the required length by *Bromelia* twine.

(8) *Bakwa* (*Pandanus* sp.) and (9) *vétiver* (*Vetiveria odorata*), imported, one from the Pacific, the other from the East Indies, and used here for plaiting hats (an industry of obviously foreign origin) and occasionally for covering huts and shelters.

THREAD, TWINE, CORDS, AND ROPES

COTTON.—Two varieties, probably indigenous and known respectively from the colors of their leaf stems as "black" and "white" cotton, are to be found close to most of the houses, and attain, since they are always left to themselves, the size of orange or apple trees. Used today only for calking canoes and for stuffing pillows and mattresses, cotton was spun by the Carib within the memory of most of those now living on the reserve. The native method was shown to me by an old woman. A band of teased cotton wound around the left wrist is spun onto a long stick or spindle by rolling the latter on the right knee. The upper end of the spindle (fuseau) is crooked. A round disk of calabash, through whose center the stick is passed, acts as base for the growing spool of thread. 283

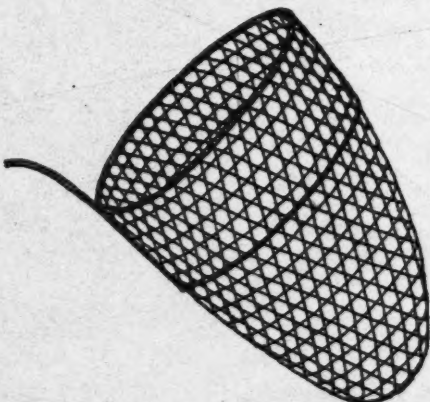


FIGURE 26.—Fish pot or landing net.

LA PITTE (KURUWA, KARATA, SILK GRASS, *Bromelia* sp.).—The leaf—longer than that of the pineapple, and without thorns—is drawn through a noose of maho or other cord attached to a projecting limb. An even pull with both hands on a short round stick over which the

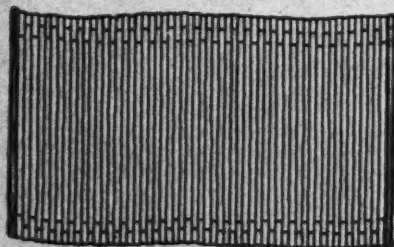


FIGURE 27.—Roll-up mat.

leaf is folded disengages the fiber and leaves the green pithy matter in the noose. The "drawn" fiber is next bleached and dried in the sun, and twine spun from it by rolling it on the naked thigh with the flattened palm of the hand (fig. 27)—a downward stroke spinning simultaneously in the required thickness two or as many single ply as are wanted, followed by an upward stroke which unites them in one thread or twine. Any length can be spun thus by the addition of more fiber when the end of one lot is reached. Twine made from la pitte is strong and lasts well in water. When used for fishing line it is strengthened and stiffened by the addition of a little gum from the gommier tree. Thread made for binding the borders of Carib baskets is rubbed with manni to render it more durable. La pitte may be made into multiple-ply cords and bands for carrying loads, tying baskets, etc.

DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE ON CARIB CULTURE

383

tells us moreover, since long before his time; and their enmity toward the English, aroused by the latter's insatiable land-greed and temporarily dispelled by the treaty of 1773 (which assigned them the northern and more mountainous quarter of the island), had been subsequently re-awakened by the openly expressed intentions of many English colonists to dispossess them still further. Instigated and supported by the French revolutionary leader, Victor Hugues, war between the St Vincent Carib ("Black" and "Yellow") together with the "democratical whites" on the one hand, and the English together with their slaves on the other, broke out on March 10, 1795, and continued until, "before the close of November 1796, the Charaibes and their allies had all submitted, on the terms offered to them by the British commander." The narrative continues:

The Charaibes, including women and children, were in number nearly 5000; and the whites and people of colour amounted to scarcely less than 1000. As, after what had passed, it was much to be feared that the colonists could never again rely upon the fidelity of their uncivilized neighbours, it was finally resolved to remove the Charaibes from the colony, and they were in consequence conveyed with their families to the Island of Rattan [*sic*], in the Bay of Honduras.¹⁵

Rouse continues: "The Carib who remained in the West Indies also intermarried somewhat with the Negroes. They continued to reside in Dominica and St. Vincent until the end of the 19th century, when they were moved to a reservation in Dominica."¹⁶ The present Carib Reserve in Dominica was created in June 1903 by enlarging the boundaries of what for long had been the largest remaining Carib settlement in the island. As far as I know, no enforced removal of Caribs took place; and there are still several patches of "Carib lands" outside the Reserve, on which Carib families or descendants of Caribs are living today. Certainly, neither then nor at any other time were Caribs moved from St Vincent to Dominica.

"The period covered is that from 1650 to 1700. . . ."¹⁷ Rouse nevertheless speaks of coconuts and limes, tortoise-shell fish-hooks and clay griddles, as if these things were contemporaneous, which is unlikely. Breton saw only two coconut trees (which the Caribs called palma, from the Spanish word for palm) in the whole of Dominica; and considered them rare enough to take and plant a nut at Basse Terre, Guadeloupe. As for limes, he says expressly: "they [the Caribs] hardly use them." Of turtle-shell fish-hooks, the 1647 Relation says: "On en voit encore chez eux, quoi qu'ils ne s'en servent plus."¹⁸ On the other hand, as

15 Edwards, *History*, vol. 4, pp. 73-74.

16 *Handbook*, p. 548.

17 *Handbook*, pp. 549-550.

18 Breton, *Dictionnaire Caribe-Français*, p. 297; Armand de la Paix, p. 68.

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GRAMINEAE. GRASS FAMILY.

- * 824 *Andropogon bicornis* Linnaeus, Sp. Pl. 1046. 1753.
Anatherum bicornis Beauvois, Ess. Agrost. 128. 1812.
Panache.

A species found from southern Mexico to Brazil and throughout the West Indies, usually on grassy slopes.

- [342] Panache is employed by the Carib as a second-rate thatching
352] material while the hairs of the raceme are sometimes used to
stuff pillows.

Specimen citation: 3166, 3352.

Bambusa vulgaris Schrader ex Wendland, Coll. Pl. 2: 26. t. 47.
1810.

Bambusa sieberi Grisebach, Fl. Br. W. I. 528. 1864.
Common Bamboo. — *kuéma* (« plume », « panache »).

Common bamboo, a native of the Old World, is now widely planted in the tropics of both hemispheres. In Dominica the beautiful arching plumes of this grass are familiar especially along roads and water courses at lower and middle elevations.

- Wherever it is grown bamboo has a number of native uses.
[227] The Creoles of Dominica construct fishpots from the split stems,
[312] and the canes themselves with the septa removed often serve as
temporary water pipes.

- 285 The Carib Indians dry the stems indoors and then split them
* 824 into fine strands which are woven into *sambura*, a kind of round
basket with a narrow mouth used for the catch made while fishing
from the coastal rocks or in the rivers. Except for its shape the
sambura is of similar construction (a round radial type) to baskets
made of *mibi* (*Anthurium palmatum* and *Monstera peruviana*), liane
* 824 *pomme* (*Passiflora laurifolia*), and the like. Bamboo is employed
[283] also in fashioning a strong type of garden basket and, as a sub-
[227] stitute for cotton thread, in the making of *kak*, the Carib and
local name for a kind of fishpot or landing net used to catch
flying fish.

Specimen citation: 174.

x 824

[772]

[755]

«tree-spirit» and for this reason — and as with *Ociba pendandra* and *Mammea americana* L. — these trees are never felled or otherwise disturbed for fear of making the spirit angry. Leaves of figuier are one of many ingredients (see *Ipomoea pes-caprae*) in a ritual bath given for any sickness caused by piai.

Specimen citation: 1567, 3268, 3271 (all representing *Ficus urbaniana*).

LORANTHACEAE. MISTLETOE FAMILY.

Peltocanthus martinicensis Eichler in Martins, Fl. Bras. 5 (2): 26, 1868.

Capitaine Bois, Maltre Bois, Boi Bois.

A hemiparasite of Martinique and Dominica. In Dominica the species frequently parasitizes mango trees. The local names also are applied to other loranthaceous species.

[755]

Caribs utilize the leaves of roi bois as one of the many ingredients (for others see *Ipomoea pes-caprae*) of a ritual bath given as a cure of any sickness caused by piai.

Specimen citation: 631.

POLYGONACEAE. BUCKWHEAT FAMILY.

Coccoloba ascendens Duss ex Lindau, Monogr. Cocc., Engl. Bot. Jahrb. 13: 156, 1890.

Liane Barril, Cercle Barril.

A liana found on several of the Caribbee islands and also recorded from Brazil.

[278]

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According to Duss (14) an infusion of the root is used in the French Antilles as a depurative for venereal diseases. Fishermen in those islands also use the flexible stems in the making of fish pots and baskets.

The Caribs of Dominica employ the sturdy stems for edging various types of baskets.

Specimen citation: 3334.

WEBBIA

VOL. XII, TAB. XCIV

W. H. HODGE & DOUGLAS TAYLOR, The Ethnobotany of the Island Caribs of Dominica.

824

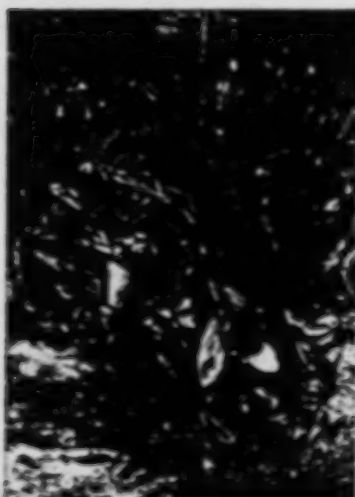


Fig. 25



Fig. 26

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Fig. 27



Fig. 28

DOMINICA CANOE PLANTS. — Fig. 25 — Arrowsroot, *Maranta arundinacea*, a valuable food and charm plant. — Fig. 26 — Giant bulb of the gommier, *Dacryodes excelsa*, source of a useful gum resin and wood for the manufacture of dugout canoes, rumaya troughs, and kitchen mortars. Closeup shows incisions at base of trunk made for stimulating the flow of the fragrant gum. — Fig. 27 — : Opening — a gommier canoe at Salybia. Low fires have been built closely paralleling the canoe which has been weighted with stones and water to aid in the spreading process. — Fig. 28 — Gommier canoes on the beach at Salybia, showing the planked sides. The nets (Kali), drying on the canoe paddles, are for catching flyingfish and are made from split bamboo.

[Opposite p. 578]